

MICHIGAN FREEDOM TRAIL REGISTER NOMINATION INFORMATION

ASSOCIATION

The Register is inclusive and incorporates the broadest range of elements possible to tell the story of the Underground Railroad. It is based on the fundamental premise that all people desire to be free and that enslavement denied the individual's humanity. The enslaved resisted, through a variety of means, wherever and whenever slavery existed. Underground Railroad activity occurred when resistance took the form of flight. Associations or connections to the Underground Railroad, or resistance to enslavement, are therefore broad and can incorporate various activities.

Sites, for example, can have a historical association through many different ways. The most common association is if the site, perhaps a building or even a natural feature, was a "station" of the Underground Railroad, that is, a place that provided refuge and assistance to fugitives. An association could also be found at a river crossing, a route, or a hiding place used by the freedom seeking enslaved. Or, a connection could be through a prominent person in the Underground Railroad movement, the site of a legal challenge to slavery, a church with an active congregation--even if the church building itself was not used as a place of refuge.

Sites where flight originated, where escapes took place, or points of organized community resistance, can be associated with the Underground Railroad. Likewise, destination sites such as maroon communities and settlements are also associated sites. Sites may be related to the anti-slavery movement, abolitionist activity or vigilance committees.

Other associated activities could include the act of rescuing individuals from enslavement, or, on the reverse side, attempts to kidnap freedom seekers or free blacks and return them to enslavement. Cemeteries that include burials of people who participated in Underground Railroad activity are important as well. These are just some of the possible associations that define Freedom Trail activity. The definition is meant to be fluid to incorporate new investigations, interpretations, and commemoration activities around the country.

ELEMENTS

The Register includes the following elements:

- A. **Site Elements:** Michigan federal, state, local, and privately owned properties pertaining to the Underground Railroad that have a verifiable connection to the Underground Railroad.

Association to the historic Underground Railroad or the more broad definition of resistance to enslavement distinguishes these elements as a part of the Freedom Trail Register.

- B. **Program and Facility Elements:** governmental and non-governmental facilities and programs of an educational, research, or interpretive nature that are directly related to the Underground Railroad.

This category invites the inclusion of a variety of different types of elements. Register listed facilities and programs can have an educational, research, or interpretive scope, as long as they are directly related to, and verifiably associated with, the Underground Railroad. Facilities can include, but are not limited to, archives and libraries, research centers, museums and museum collections, and cultural or commemorative centers.

Programs can be even more diverse in nature. They can include, but are not limited to, tours, interpretive talks, traveling exhibits, theater productions, living history groups, and educational programs. There are a multitude of Underground Railroad-related sites around the United States that have suffered the impacts of prolonged negligence or developments inconsistent with the historical character of the site. These past activities may have left the site ineligible for National Register of Historic Places listing.

Nonetheless, these sites are often integral parts of the Underground Railroad story. Their significance should not be lost, so the Michigan Freedom Trail Register is designed to include these impacted sites, with the provision that they must be associated with some type of interpretation.

CRITERIA

Any element nominated to the Register must have an association to the Underground Railroad or resistance to enslavement. The association of a site to the Underground Railroad or resistance to enslavement must be documented in a verifiable way using professional methods of historical research. As applicable, documentation of Underground Railroad or resistance to enslavement association will include the identification of the type of activity, the period of significance, significant personalities, cultural or ethnic identities of the associated personalities, and source materials.

In many cases, the record of historic Underground Railroad and resistance to enslavement activity at a site is fragmentary. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to use a variety of sources to document association. Bear in mind, however, that evidence must be corroborative, verifiable, and able to withstand professional scrutiny. There is a growing bibliography on the practice of documenting Underground Railroad sites. For assistance, applicants should turn to:

- Exploring a Common Past: Researching and Interpreting the Underground Railroad, 2nd Edition (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1998);
- Eleanor O'Donnell, Researching a Historic Property, National Register Bulletin (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1998); and
- Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms, National Register Bulletin No. 16a (Washington, D.C., 1997).

Sites on or determined eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places that have a documented association to the Underground Railroad or resistance to enslavement will also be eligible for the Register. A site ineligible for the National Register, for whatever reason, or a site without a determination of eligibility, may be eligible for the Register if it has a demonstrated and verified association to the Underground Railroad or resistance to enslavement.

ELIGIBILITY

Any site, facility, or program that applies for listing in the Register must have the support of the owner, manager, or director. Public-owned properties must also have support from the site manager. A letter of property owner support must accompany the nomination of any site not owned by the National Park Service or the federal government.

In addition to demonstrating an association to the Underground Railroad and owner or manager support, facilities and programs nominated to the Register must demonstrate that the nominated element exceeds a minimum level of:

- professionalism
- accuracy
- operation and
- accessibility.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

All facilities and programs must be in operation and not solely in the planning stages. To this end, they must be able to demonstrate a past and ongoing commitment to interpreting or studying the Underground Railroad or resistance to enslavement. The Michigan Freedom Trail Commission recognizes that many facilities and programs around the state operate on a volunteer basis or rely on scarce resources. Therefore the criteria, while meant to establish a certain level of legitimacy, accountability, and accuracy to telling the story, are also designed to be inclusive and subjective so that as wide a range of elements are eligible for inclusion as possible.

For example, facilities such as libraries, archives, and museums, must demonstrate a willingness to share information and be accessible to the public and researchers. Basic professional standards that museums, archives, and libraries should meet are:

- a catalog system for their collections in the form, for example, of a finding aid or index for collections and
- an ability to demonstrate the provenance, or origin, authenticity, and acquisition history of their collections.

Research centers are often associated with these types of facilities and programs. If the element is applying for inclusion as a research center, it should also be able to demonstrate that the center director or key staff members have an appropriate level of training, which is usually recognized as at least having earned a Master's degree in an associated field of study, and a record of operations through a measurable output, such as a past and ongoing production of a journal or reports.

In addition to demonstrating an association to the Underground Railroad and program director support, programs that are interpretive or educational in nature must show:

- that they are recurring or have a record of operations
- accuracy in presentation
- a record of consultation with appropriate partners and community or regional support and
- a system established for the evaluation of the program's effectiveness.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Please read carefully. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Michigan Freedom Trail Coordinator before and during the application process. Direct questions to:

Michigan Freedom Trail Commission
Michigan History Center
P.O. Box 30740
Lansing, MI 48909-8240
Phone: 517-373-1650

Complete an Application Form and submit it, with all necessary supporting materials, to the above address.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM

The first step in the application process is to complete the cover page providing general information about the site, tour, facility or program. Then proceed to either the Section A: Site Information sheet or the Section B: Program and Facility Information sheet depending on what type of element you wish to nominate to the Michigan Freedom Trail Register. Attach additional pages and supporting information as necessary, but be sure to identify element name and questions addressed on each additional sheet or item of additional material. The application form and all application packages, including any supporting material, must be submitted in hard copy to the Michigan Freedom Trail Coordinator. The applicant may submit either original or photocopied letters of support. All photographs should be submitted in either digital format or 35mm print film, in color or black and white.

Approved applications and all supporting material will become the property of the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission and will not be returned to the applicant.

Applications can be mailed at anytime to the Michigan Freedom Trail Coordinator. Within three months of receiving an application, the Michigan Freedom Trail Coordinator will review it to determine if it includes all the required materials. The Coordinator may contact the applicant for clarification or amplification of unclear points in the application. If the application is incomplete or requires major revisions, the application will be returned to the applicant with explanations and recommendations from the Coordinator. Revised applications may be resubmitted.

APPROVAL PROCESS

The Michigan Freedom Trail Coordinator will forward complete and authentic applications to the appropriate Michigan Freedom Trail Commission Review Committee for consideration. Within three months of receiving the referral from the Michigan Freedom Trail Coordinator, the Review Committee will recommend qualified sites, programs and facilities to the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission for final approval. The Commission meets quarterly and will review any pending applications at each quarterly meeting. Commission-approved applications will be listed in the Michigan Freedom Trail Register. A letter will be sent to the applicant bearing the following:

"The Michigan Freedom Trail Commission has determined that this (site, facility or program) makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the Underground Railroad and resistance to enslavement in Michigan history. It meets the requirements for inclusion and has been listed in the Michigan Freedom Trail Register."

Following receipt of the letter of approval, the applicant will receive permission to use the Michigan Freedom Trail Register logo according to the guidelines for its use. Successful applicants are encouraged to submit an application to the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

Applications that are not approved for inclusion will be returned to the applicant.

REGISTER REVIEW

Register status for sites is indefinite unless substantial changes are made to the property. For facilities and programs, Register status may be reviewed at the discretion of the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission.

In order to facilitate such review, the Commission may request programs and facilities to submit an assessment or update of activities and explain any changes in goals or missions that have occurred since the original listing or most recent review. Such review will not occur more frequently than every two years unless there is evidence that the site, facility or program no longer meets the criteria for inclusion, or if the Freedom Trail Coordinator receives numerous complaints about the applicant's activities. Other causes for an unscheduled review may be if the applicant is found to have misrepresented itself, if inaccuracies are found in the application, network criteria are violated, or there is evidence of unethical or offensive activities.

The Michigan Freedom Trail Coordinator will review updated submissions and bring changes of status recommendations to the notice of the Freedom Trail Site Review Committee, which may recommend removal to the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission. Property owners will be notified by the Michigan Freedom Trail Coordinator of removal from the Register, and may resubmit a nomination package according to the procedure outlined above.